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Country Reports on Terrorism 2022: Türkiye

BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM

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Türkiye

Overview: Türkiye continued its efforts to defeat terrorist organizations both inside and outside its borders, including the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front, and ISIS. The country is an active contributor to international counterterrorism fora, including the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS as a co-lead for the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Working Group.

Türkiye is a source and transit country for FTFs seeking to join ISIS and other terrorist groups fighting in Syria and Iraq, as well as for FTFs who seek to depart Syria and Iraq. According to its Ministry of Interior, Türkiye has deported 9,000 FTFs representing 102 different nationalities since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, including 20 FTFs from six EU member states, as of September. Türkiye reportedly deported an alleged member of an ISIS execution cell known as "the Beatles" to the UK. On September 8, Turkish President Erdogan announced that the Turkish security forces in Istanbul captured alleged ISIS executive Bashar Khattab Ghazal al-Sumaidai. According to officials, Turkish security forces captured 19 ISIS-linked potential suicide bombers plotting attacks in Türkiye in 2022.

The Turkish Minister of Interior said that Turkish security forces wounded, killed, or captured 1,220 terrorists belonging to various organizations, including 57 individuals on Türkiye's

wanted list. Public data indicated that at year's end Turkish authorities detained 29,751 people suspected of links to terrorist groups or aiding them. The PKK continued to conduct terrorist attacks in Türkiye and against Turkish interests outside of Türkiye. Türkiye's security forces conducted operations domestically along with military operations in northern Iraq and northern Syria. Turkish airstrikes reportedly aimed at fighting the PKK in Syria and Iraq have also resulted in civilian casualties. The International Crisis Group, an NGO, assessed that at year's end 92 state security forces, 323 PKK members, and 20 civilians were killed in PKK-linked clashes or attacks.

On November 19, Turkish Armed Forces launched an operation with airstrikes in northern Syria and Iraq following the deadly terror attack in Istanbul. Politically motivated detentions and arrests of individuals — including journalists, human rights activists, lawyers, and politicians accused of supporting or aiding the PKK — continued in 2022.

In the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt, the government labeled the movement of self-exiled cleric and political figure Fethullah Gulen as the "Fethullahist Terrorist Organization" (FETO). FETO is not a designated terrorist organization in the United States. The Turkish government continued to detain and arrest Turkish citizens as well as foreign citizens residing in Türkiye for alleged FETO or terrorism-related links, often based on scant evidence and minimal due process. A locally employed staff member at U.S. Mission Türkiye remained unjustly detained for alleged FETO links. The government also continued to dismiss military, security, and civil servants from public office in 2022. Since the 2016 coup attempt, authorities have dismissed or suspended tens of thousands of civil servants and government workers, including more than 60,000 police and military personnel and more than 4,000 judges and prosecutors, arrested or imprisoned more than 95,000 citizens, and closed more than 1,500 NGOs on terrorism-related grounds, primarily for alleged FETO ties.

2022 Terrorist Incidents: The following are notable incidents:

On April 21 a bus carrying prison security personnel in Türkiye's northwestern Bursa province was struck by an IED, killing a prison guard, and injuring four others, including one in critical condition. Turkish authorities said "radical leftist organizations" were behind the attack.

On September 26 one Turkish National Police officer was killed, and another was wounded, in a complex terror attack targeting a police housing compound in the Tece neighborhood of Mersin, in southeastern Türkiye. The PKK claimed the attack.

On November 13 a bomb exploded on a busy pedestrian street in Istanbul, İstiklal Avenue, killing six Turkish citizens, including two children, and wounding 81. The attack was not claimed; however, Turkish authorities have blamed the PKK for the attack.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Türkiye has a broad definition of terrorism that includes so-called crimes against the constitutional order and internal and external security of the state, which the government regularly used to criminalize the exercise of freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly. The General Directorate of Security announced on September 27 that it took legal action against 22 social media users who posted content about the terrorist attack against the police house in Mersin, for “inciting the public to hatred and enmity.” Legal actions taken by Türkiye against the accused included a mix of charges related to terrorism or other criminal activity under Turkish law. Türkiye has advanced law enforcement capacity to combat terrorism, and efforts continued to streamline interagency information sharing.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Türkiye is a member of FATF, and its FIU, the Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK), is a member of the Egmont Group. Türkiye remained on the FATF “gray list” in 2022.

In 2022, FATF reported that Türkiye took steps toward improving its Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism regime, including by increasing the human resources at the FIU to conduct analysis, conducting some outreach to the non-profit organization sector about its risks and vulnerabilities to terrorist financing activity, and pursuing numerous domestic designations under United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 to target terrorist financing in line with Türkiye’s risk profile. MASAK also released several communiqués to tighten practices for combating money laundering and financing of terrorism in 2022. On June 3, MASAK announced a strategy document for combating money laundering and financing of terrorism in Türkiye and increasing efficiency in confiscation practices. On November 26, MASAK published two guides for fighting the financing of terrorism. To date, AML/CFT audits have focused on NPOs working on human rights issues and vulnerable communities, particularly groups that focus on the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons. Human rights NGOs reported the government used supposed counterterrorist financing legislation to conduct increased and more onerous audits of organizations and associations focusing on human rights, rule of law, LGBTQI+ issues, or topics otherwise sensitive to the ruling party, and had a substantial chilling effect on civil society.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2022 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes* [1 MB].

Countering Violent Extremism: The Turkish National Police (TNP) undertook social projects, activities with parents, and in-service training for officers and teachers. Programs prepared medical, community, and religious officials for intervening to undermine terrorist messaging and prevent recruitment. The Ministry of Justice implemented some rehabilitation and reintegration programs for convicts and former criminals. The Ministry of Interior claimed that, by year's end, 124 PKK members had surrendered to Turkish security forces through persuasion efforts. On November 1, Türkiye repatriated a PKK member who has surrendered in Algeria. Türkiye's Religious Affairs Presidency (Diyanet) reported that it worked to "undermine terrorist messaging by promoting its inclusive version of Islam." Antalya is a member of the Strong Cities Network.

International and Regional Cooperation: Türkiye is a member of the United Nations, NATO, the Committee of Experts on Terrorism of the Council of Europe, and the Global Counterterrorism Forum. Türkiye also contributed to the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, a GCTF-inspired institution, and provided expert support to assist in training for judges and prosecutors handling terrorism cases. Türkiye participated in OSCE expert meetings on the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism, organized by the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Secretariat.

Türkiye has bilateral security cooperation agreements with more than 70 countries. The TNP contributed to CT capacity building programs of partner countries and offers specialized international law enforcement training in a variety of sectors, including counterterrorism.

TAGS

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